

JAMES BUCHANAN

1857 - 1861



James Buchanan was the 15th president and the only president who never married. He was born in 1791 in Franklin County, Pennsylvania, studied law, and became a member of the Pennsylvania state legislature at the age of 23. He was Minister to Russia and to England, and was Secretary of State under President Polk.

Harriet Lane acted as White House hostess for James Buchanan, her favorite uncle. She was born in 1830 in Franklin County, Pennsylvania and was orphaned at the age of eleven. Buchanan supervised her education and introduced her to fashionable circles. As her uncle's hostess she won national popularity.



President James Buchanan served as a representative in Congress from 1821 to 1831 and was a Democratic member of the Senate from 1834 until 1845. Though he felt that slavery was morally wrong, his position was that Congress had no legal power to interfere in states where slavery already existed. During his administration he leaned toward pro-slavery factions, but worked to preserve the union, trying to effect a peaceful settlement of the differences between the North and South. However, it was not possible to placate both the North and the South during this period of tension. In the last year of his presidency, the South seceded. He supported President Lincoln and the Union until he died in 1868.

While Buchanan was serving as Secretary of State under President Polk, his niece Harriet Lane was welcomed to Washington and called the new "Democratic Queen." While serving as White House hostess during the Buchanan administration, she gave special care in seating arrangements for formal dinners to see that political foes were kept apart. When Buchanan retired from office she returned with him to his home near Lancaster, Pennsylvania. At the age of 36 she married Henry Johnston, and after losing her uncle, her husband and two sons over the next 18 years, decided to live in Washington where she acquired a large art collection. The collection was accepted by the Smithsonian Institution after her death in 1903.

Arizona Timeline

1857 - Lt. Beale, commissioned by the U.S. Government to build a wagon road along the 35th parallel, uses camels, pack mules and horses. His road building crews locate springs in the Kingman area that would eventually bear his name and become one of the first water sources for the town.

1859 - Fort Mojave is established by Col. William Hoffman. The 6th U.S. Infantry, a force of 600 men, marched from Yuma to the Mojave villages to protect travelers on the Beale Road against the Mojave Indians in Northwest Arizona Territory.